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ABSTRACT

This report traces the history and contributions of California's cooperative nursery schools (co-ops) within the context of the national growth in preschools. From the late 1870s through the 1920s, Froebel's ideas regarding the education of young children were evident in early nursery schools. By the late 1920s, nursery schools generally followed the tenets of either extreme behaviorism, with the goal of habit formation through rigid routines, or the Progressive Education practice of active play in a social setting. During the 1950s and 1960s, the number of nursery schools increased, nursery school boards were formed, there were attempts to incorporate, the council newsletter flourished, and there was effective legislative activity regarding licensing. In California, schools in different regions had different priorities and provided different types of services. Contributing to the success of California co-ops was the favorable attitude of state legislators. Co-ops also provided leadership training for women; several women who are currently influential in early childhood education got their start in these schools. In the late 1960s, the co-op movement reached a plateau, characterized by financial constraints and over-regulation. Changes in the family, especially the return of women to the workforce, contributed to the decline in co-ops since the 1970s, but the trend toward mothers choosing not to work full time and men assuming more nurturing parental roles has positive implications for co-ops. California co-ops have influenced the entire profession of early childhood education, ranging from the initiation of Nursery Education Week to the creation of Play Doh. (Contains 14 references.) (KDFB)

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CALIFORNIA'S COOPERATIVE NURSERY SCHOOLS: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE PAST

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Keynote Address at the 48th Annual Convention
California Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools
(CCPPNS)
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"IT'S THE CAMARADERIE"
–
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California's Cooperative Nursery Schools
Perspectives from the Past

We should be serving birthday cake this weekend, since the California Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools was born fifty years ago in San Francisco. East Bay Cooperative Council, the first regional council in the United States, had organized the previous year. Los Angeles and San Francisco councils had been established for a few months. When members of parent participation schools met in 1947, at the annual conference of the California Association for Nursery Education, they discovered their mutual goals and their unique problems. They decided that an organization was needed just for parent participation nursery schools – and here we are, half a century later.

As the cooperative nursery schools began to proliferate, several other councils were established. Long Beach joined the state council in 1949. Schools in the northern part of Marin split off from San Francisco in 1950 to form the Redwood Empire Council. Peninsula organized in 1952. By 1953, when there were about 200 member schools, a state convention was held in Los Angeles. The major emphasis was development of a constitution and the establishment of policies. The definition of a parent participation nursery school was a major problem, since about half of the member schools were incorporated as non-profit entities and the other half were receiving funds from adult education or other outside sources. It was decided that any school with parent participation could become a council member, a decision reflected in the diversity of sponsorships represented at this convention.

Through the years, new councils formed and others dropped out. In some cases, special efforts have been made to assist councils, as when the Sacramento council disbanded in 1963 because of the distances involved. Since its inception, the state association has included Independent Member Schools in areas where there are just one or two co-ops. Several schools of the Sacramento area still belonged to the California Council and the CCPPNS minutes record a series of meetings held with their representatives. As a result of the enthusiasm generated in January of 1971, the council re-activated with eight schools and with others pending. This type of support continues in areas not now represented by organized councils and we can anticipate that there will be continued changes in the CCPPNS structure.

The Decades Before Councils

Although organization into councils was new, the idea of cooperative nursery schools had developed in the late 1920s. It is difficult to realize there were no child research centers, no observation preschools, no child development classes or nursery school teacher training textbooks, little scientific knowledge about young children in a social setting until that decade after World War I. Even terms like "nursery school" or "preschool" and "child develoment" were new. The idea of nursery schools had been brought from England around 1920, with the name chosen because they were for "nurturing" young children, rather than "nursing" them. By 1929, the *Yearbook* editor for the National Society for the Study of Education explained its Preschool and Parental Education theme by stating that "The development of nursery schools has been so rapid that it is almost impossible to trace the influences that have been at work. One of the most outstanding characteristics of this growth has been the variety of avenues ... psychological research, home economics, educational methods and curricula, preschool clinics, professional careers for married women, philanthropy, and mothers' coöperative care of children are a few of them."

Even earlier in the Twentieth Century, development had implied proper nutrition and physical health, since psychology, social work, home economics and pediatrics were just becoming established. By the mid-1920s, several approaches to the study of children were vying for attention. Which is most important, the nature of the child – what we would now call the genetic aspect – or its nurture? Wartime testing of military personnel had brought awareness of the Intelligence Quotient (IQ). Educators were wondering whether intelligence could be improved and, if so, how this might be done. Parents were questioning whether children are predestined at birth for certain accomplishments. Could special conditions and activities make a difference? On the side of the environment, more popular among physicians than among educators and parents, was an extreme version of behaviorism largely based upon the work of John B. Watson. He asserted that a proper conditioning schedule could make any child become anything. His classic advise was that parents should not show sentiment, that they should never hug and kiss children. Katharine Whiteside Taylor, who became the outstanding individual in the cooperative nursery school movement, later recalled how miserable she was when she followed this sort of regime with her first-born daughter. His scientific recommendations were also followed in some nursery schools during this period, where routines were rigid and the primary goal was habit formation.

The opposing view, that children learn through active play in a social setting, was held by those who were traditional kindergarten teachers or advocates of what was called Progressive Education. I'll say more about this later, but Lois Meek, later Lois Meek Stolz, belonged to the latter group. As Education Secretary for the AAUW (American Association of University Women), she helped establish Mother's Study clubs during the late 1920s. These clubs often evolved into parent-sponsored play groups and cooperative preschools. Both Children's Community and Berkeley Hills Nursery School started in this way. By 1932, just before the great depression reached its depths, the U.S. Office of Education reported that there were 18 cooperatives. Innovations of the 1920s were applied on a national scale during the 1930s and early 40s through government funded "WPA" preschools and "Lanham Act" centers, but nothing much happened in the cooperative nursery school movement until the late 1940s, when World War II was over, women were expected to be contented housewives, and the Baby Boom was starting.

The Period of "Mushroom Growth"

One of the exciting things about what I call "doing history" is the way unexpected treasures are unearthed. When my proposal for writing the history of parent participation preschools was accepted by the Center for Cooperatives at the University of California in Davis, my plea for help appeared in several professional publications. One Sunday morning, I got a telephone call from Betty Montgomery, an OMEP member who had a 1953 doctoral dissertation written by someone named Sue Hickmott. Did I want to see it? Of course! It tabulated the results of an detailed survey of cooperative nursery schools. Seventy-nine were in California. Nineteen of those returned the questionnaires that were included in her study. Seven of these, Albany Preschool, Children's Community in Berkeley, Kensington Play Center in Berkeley, Oneonta of South Pasadena, Pied Piper in Walnut Creek, San Mateo Parents' Cooperative, and Tiny Tots in Oakland, are still functioning. Of the 19, Children's Community was started in 1927, the next two not until 1939 and 1940, then two in 1942 and one more in 1943. During the next six years, there were twelve, with four of them in 1950. Since we know that Berkeley Hills was one of the original co-ops, having split off from Children's Community by 1931, its omission in this listing can make us question how many others failed to return their questionnaires, but Hickmott's findings are consistent with the great increase of independently functioning parent participation preschools across the country by the early 1950s.

Another source of information about the early co-ops was the 1955 edition of *Pointers for Parent Cooperatives*, the first publication of

CCPPNS. It included a "base line" report of California's cooperative nursery schools at the end of the 1953/54 academic year. Their questionnaire had been sent to their 200 member nursery schools, but only 64 returned it. Of these 64, 62 answered that the study of children was an important part of their program and that there were regular parent education meetings. Of the 31 that stated they were under some sort of adult education program, paid hours ranged from 3 1/2 (required weekly parent meeting?) to 40. Other expenses were met by fees in 33 schools, by fund raising in 4, and by both fees and fund raising in 9. (Contradicting this was a response that 54 schools have fund raising drives. Also contradictory was the response of 47 that they were private schools with some adult education funding.) Tuition ranged from $1 to $38 a month, with registration fees of $2 to $10. In the question asking what the tuition covered, 11 responded salary and expenses, 25 included salary, rent and supplies, and 5 said that it covered all expenses. All but one had a parent executive board and committees. All required parents to participate at school, assisting the teacher and doing additional service. The average required participation was 5 hours per week, but the range was from 1 weekly session to 28 hours per month.

Fifty years ago, these widely varied parent participation preschools were scattered over the state. The difficulties of transportation and of mothers getting time off from their homemaking responsibilities led to establishment of separate Northern and Southern Boards, with conventions alternating between them. The system has continued even though many officers can agree with the 1975 state president who said that she felt like a tennis ball bouncing back and forth. Another problem came with attempts to incorporate. In typical co-op style, mothers relied upon a volunteer attorneys - a father, of course. (It seems hard to comprehend now, but in the 1950s one of the roadblocks was the presence of female names on legal papers. Women weren't supposed to do such unfeminine things as going to law school or even signing the incorporation papers of an association they had developed.)

It was not until 1961, following the joint North-South board meeting in Bakersfield, that the incorporation of the California Council of Parent Participation of Nursery Schools, the CCPPNS, was finalized. By then, it included ten regional councils with approximately 200 schools. I might add that I was the member who made arrangements for that 1961 meeting and that I still have a file of correspondence that dealt primarily with expenses. How could a mother justify spending eight dollars at a hotel and another two dollars for restaurant meals when the father was working so hard to provide for the family? We not only had four mothers registered for some rooms, but others brought their sleeping bags and camped out on

the floor. Barbara Hoyt, who chaired the Home Economics Department at the community college, was a Bakersfield Play Center alumnus. She somehow arranged a free luncheon for everyone. When I think back to those days, I recognize how important they were in establishing a spirit of camaraderie that has been sustained to the present.

During this past half century, the consistent link between individual parents, their nursery schools, and the state organization has been the council newsletter. One way to follow the increased sophistication of co-op members and the technological development of communications is through changes in the state council newsletter. In November 1994, I reviewed all membership publications at the San Jose home of the *Preschooler* editor, Rita Horiguchi, who shared her companionable cat and a computer for two intense work days. I found that the first Bulletin, in 1948, was produced on a manual typewriter and a borrowed mimeograph machine, with the heading of CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF PARENT COOPERATIVE NURSERY SCHOOLS typed in capital letters. By 1955, there was a stencilled "masthead" on the front page, but many words were not readable. For June 1956, enough copies were printed for every member family, rather than one per school, and the goal of at least two issues per year was established. Although it was still mimeographed on rough paper, this issue announced the contest for a newsletter name. A hand-printed capitalized name, THE PRESCHOOLER, appeared in September of the following year. This issue also had the first photograph. It showed another legislative victory for co-ops, with Governor Knight authorizing nursery schools as adult education classes on public school property while State Council officers, in the pretty hats and white gloves that we always wore for special events in those days, were looking over his shoulder. By Fall of 1960, the improved readability of the newsletter was explained by an announcement that the state's Executive Secretary could do work for members on the new Temp-Geha Duplicator, with an electronic stencil cutter, but no volume or issue numbers were used yet. Since that time, partly attributable to the income provided by paid advertising, the composition and print quality have given it a "professional" appearance. Use of computerized techniques for layout and reproduction have produced a *Preschooler* that is comparable to that of national organizations or private corporations. In the spring of 1996, the CCPPNS board took a step into the computer age. The new position of Internet Chairman was announced, an e-mail address was acquired, and work was begun on a web page site to publicize the council and its member schools.

Another integrative factor has come through legislative activity. Even before a council was formally organized, cooperatives were represented on a committee that was studying licensing regulations for the

state's preschool programs. They demonstrated their political clout by getting licensing as a requirement, but with appropriate provisions for the parent participation preschools. At the same time, the co-op legislative committees helped in the successful campaign for federal wartime child care centers to be maintained by the public schools. California became the only state in the union in which this was accomplished. This feeling of power was a rewarding experience for an organization made up of young mothers and advocacy continued to be important. Parents have been willing and able to fight for their beliefs. For example, after Governor Brown instituted an economy measure in 1975 that closed down the California inspection and licensing system, cooperatives took the lead in a class action lawsuit that reinstituted the earlier requirements. Ten years later, Children's Community of Berkeley was one of the petitioners when state taxes were imposed on property owned by non-profit schools. Their the *pro bono* attorney got a "landmark decision" and director Elsie Gee wrote a brochure that became a model for other California schools. At this 1997 convention, there is shared concern about proposed requirements for playground safety that will take effect in the year 2000.

Co-ops as Internships in Leadership Development

Sociologists have conducted experiments that demonstrate how a diverse assemblage of individuals becomes a solid working group when they are trying to attain a common goal. If they face adversity, they become even closer together - or they don't survive. Almost every cooperative nursery school has had to cope with major problems, often in connection with finding and keeping the site for their program. During the 1950s and 1960s, when women were expected to have few interests outside their homes, the cooperative nursery schools provided what I call an internship in leadership development. They learned to work together as a team, a lesson that corporate management is now trying to learn through expensive seminars. Let me give two examples. About twenty years ago, the new liaison member from CCPPNS introduced herself at a meeting of the California Association for the Education of Young Children. There were perhaps two dozen board members present, most of us professors in early childhood programs or administrators of agencies. I suggested that we welcome our new liaison member by raising our hands if we had "gotten our start" in a co-op - and about half of those around the table indicated that they had. The second example came in 1995. During the summer, the publisher of Child Care Information Exchange had asked readers to nominate persons still professionally active who had been the "movers and shapers" of early childhood education during this century. Of

the thirty who were chosen, about half had started in cooperative nursery schools, Head Start, or both.

There is just time to tell one story that is particularly relevant today because it begins right here in San Mateo. Members of the American Association of University Women recognized the need for a parent participation preschool in 1947. With financial assistance from the Adult Education Department at the College of San Mateo, they opened in an abandoned army barracks in September of 1948. According to a history of the school, "The years 1949-1959 were among the most tumultuous the school was to endure." During the polio epidemic of the early '50s, there was pressure to close, but with Public Health Department support it remained open. In 1955, the old barracks building was declared a fire hazard. The school then lived a nomadic life, moving to the Chinese Baptist Church in 1955 and to St. Andrew's Church in 1957." St. Andrew's decided to remodel, so the next year was at a park playground.

The building fund, after ten years of continual effort, was enough to purchase land near the co-sponsoring community college. When the co-op parents applied for necessary re-zoning, angry residents objected to possible noise and traffic problems and suggested that children might wander out to drown in the nearby bay. Despite these protests, the City Council gave unanimous approval. Parents raised over $5000 by selling $25 promissary notes funds to help finance the $30,000 structure. The local bank agreed to loan $15,000 on a fourteen year mortgage. Their report in the November 1959 CCPPNS newsletter was written by Lilian Katz, their publicity chairman, and it concludes "The parents of the nursery school worked extremely hard to solve many legal, technical and especially financial problems. I hope that other nursery schools facing housing problems will take courage from the long struggle of the San Mateo Parents' Nursery School which at times was thought to be without end."

After chairing its publicity committee, Lilian Katz was elected president of the San Mateo Parents' Cooperative Nursery School for the transition year of 1960/61. That *Preschooler* article was the first thing she ever wrote for publication. By 1975, a biographical sketch described her as "a meteoric intellect with an infectious warmth and wit … unsurpassed as a lecturer and consultant in the field of early childhood education." In 1995, when she was one of those thirty individuals chosen by readers of *Exchange* as "key people who have shaped our profession," it was stated that "There is no more effective explicator of early childhood teaching practices than Lilian Katz. She is respected worldwide for her writing and speaking on teacher training and curriculum development. Currently, she serves as director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early

Childhood Education and as professor of early childhood education at the University of Illinois."

Lilian Katz told me that her professional career began with her own needs as a mother and her participation in parent cooperative nursery schools more than thirty years ago. "I can't imagine how else I would have managed! ... When a neighborhood friend saw me with a three-, two-, and under one-year-old dripping over my arms and recommended the co-op around the corner, I decided to try it. What I saw there was a teacher (Eleanor Van Leeuwen) who impressed me as calm and competent with 20 children and I could barely manage my three!!" She followed this experience with two years at San Mateo and another at the Carlmont Parent Co-op, which she helped establish. She taught at the Redwood Parents Cooperative for two years before going to Stanford University - where she was named "Outstanding Woman Doctoral Graduate" in 1968. As one of her many elective offices, Lilian Katz was president of NAEYC from 1992 to 1994. In the "From Our President" pages of *Young Children*, she credited her interest in early childhood education to "five years of participation in parent cooperative nursery schools in California more than 30 year ago" and presented suggestions for adapting them to the needs of today's parents. A "special parental classroom participation leave program as a job benefit" was proposed and its advantages were enumerated.

In 1967, Lilian Katz became the first director of ERIC/EECE, where she has successfully fought budget cuts while reproducing research reports, journal articles and presentations. Almost five million users from around the world used ERIC/ECE in 1995. As first editor of the *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* in 1986, she established high standards that have helped improve opinons about early childhood education as a profession. She has led studies on the developmental needs of teachers and codified ethical behavior. At the same time, her concern for what actually happens between adults and children in preschool classrooms has led her to develop the Enabler Model for setting up early childhood programs without a predesigned curriculum. She coordinates summer institutes and writes extensively about using the project approach, which she sees as in-depth investigations of real phenomena and events that provide opportunities for young children to gain and apply a wide variety of understandings and skills. It is interesting to speculate about what Lilian Katz and a multitude of others would be doing now if they had not participated in their children's nursery schools. Their involvement was not just an internship in leadership but was a route to self-realization and self-confidence that opened many doors – and windows – for later accomplishments.

The Bigger Picture

These achievements – of individuals, of nursery schools, and of councils – were not just in California, of course. Although my emphasis today is upon this state, we must pause to recognize the parallel history in the rest of the country during the 1940s and 50s. Sue Hickmott's 1953 dissertation included data in separate columns for California and New York, with others clustered into Northwest, Mid-West, East and South. These columns showed a concentration of openings between 1946 and 1951. There was only one in the Northwest before 1950, with none until 1944 in the Mid-West. Note that this doesn't mean that there weren't any co-op nursery schools before then; she just did not locate them or have returned questionnaires. Tuition ranged from "none" to $18.00 a month, with California fees a bit lower than those in the eastern states, for half day classes three, four, or five days a week. Annual salaries were from $450 to $1000, with one in California of $6000 a year. Although Hickmott's 1952 survey indicated the wide diversity among cooperative preschools, it showed that ours had the highest percentage of sites with free rent and the most licensed programs.

Since publications and information were being exchanged among parent participation preschool councils as they formed across the country during the 1950s, the idea of a national organization seemed logical. After several years of preliminary work, the organizational meeting of the American Council of Cooperative Preschools took place in August of 1960. A Californian, Mary Lewis, was named Second Vice President. In recognition of the interests shared with Canadian cooperatives, this council was re-named Parent Participation Preschools International in 1964, at a joint meeting with California Council in San Jose. Other conventions were held jointly with California Council in 1977, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Children's Community, and in 1993 in San Francisco. A large proportion of the nursery schools that are members of CCPPNS are also members of PCPI, many Californians have held PCPI offices, and an official delegate provides liaison between our state council and the national group.

A review of the CCPNS convention reports, minutes and publications shows that there has been a conscious effort to make everyone feel part of this large organizational network. The Family Tree Quilt that hangs behind the registration table this weekend is one example. It was designed by Sue Conley of the Rainbow School in Santa Ana in 1977-78 and is updated as necessary. Its roots represent PCPI and the trunk has the state symbol. Branches signify Regional Councils and each of its leaves is embroidered with the name of a member school. Not even a quilt is without problems, however. After it was originally displayed, Northern

Area Board correspondence stated that "San Francisco Council and East Bay Council DO NOT want to be represented on the quilt upside down."

Although the parent participation nursery schools share an overall philosophy, we must recognize that there have always been different priorities and different services to member schools from one state or province to another and within the regional councils. This can be shown by comparing the northern and southern councils here in California during their early years. In both Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay areas, there were special conditions that had led to the rapid development of co-ops following World War II. These areas were not only growing rapidly but were gaining an unusually high proportion of well educated young families with one or more small children in the new housing tracts surrounding the large cities. Many fathers were taking advantage of government funding for veterans to continue their educations and of "GI" home loans with low interest rates, but they were far from their kinship support systems. Repeatedly I've been told by those who were participating mothers during those years that "The co-op WAS my family." From the beginning, however, the unique concerns of each co-op council across North America can be demonstrated by comparing what was happening in the northern and southern California when the state council was being developed.

In 1946, soon after the East Bay Council of Cooperative Play Centers was established, its activities were reported to the California legislature by Mary Woods Bennett, a professor at Mills College. Each of the dozen member schools sent an official delegate to the monthly meetings. A bulletin had been published to help other groups establish nursery schools. Facilities were usually adequate, and legal requirements that had been instituted in November 1945 called for licensing by the state Department of Social Welfare. Emphasis by inspectors was concentrated on removing fire hazards, securing better plumbing facilities, and safeguarding health. Bennett noted that parents desired to learn more about their roles, but their main reason for organizing was to provide a valuable experience for their children. She emphasized that there was no evidence of "a desire to dump" children.

The Berkeley Mental Health Association provided parent education programs during 1946. In the following year, a Consultant Service provided individual and group guidance by psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychiatric social workers to member schools paying $5 per month. In addition, for their evening meetings each school could have two Mental Health Association speakers per semester or four per year for a fee of $2 each. In-service training of professional staff members was instituted in 1948. At one meeting I attended that year, the featured topic was

construction of equipment for the housekeeping corner. Everything was made of wooden orange crates and apple boxes, but the really radical idea was one of those new Bendix automatic washing machines with its revolving tub made of a five gallon ice cream container. (Dryers had not been developed yet, but the director conducting the workshop showed us miniature clothespins from the dime store.)

A more typical East Bay Director's Council workshop series was conducted monthly by Frank Politzer, a psychologist whose own children attended a cooperative nursery school. His emphasis was on helping directors assure mothers that they were doing the right thing in sending their children to nursery school, that most children will naturally want to cling to their mothers on participation day, and that it is a positive learning experience for them to have instruction from a variety of adults. He urged directors to notice the quiet children and to recognize the positive things being done by those with behavior problems. He also suggested that mothers shouldn't have to perform tasks that they feel are really distasteful, since children will sense it, but added that some who complain are really getting a lot out of the experience.

The Los Angeles coordinating council had a different emphasis. It was formed in late 1946 by representatives from Echo Park, North Hollywood, Canyon, Santa Monica, Lakeview, Aliso Village and Rancho cooperative nursery schools. Work began immediately on a manual to provide new co-ops with information about insurance, licensing requirements, and health concerns. Five well publicized meetings presented authoritative speakers during the first year. There were seventeen member schools by the end of 1947 and two years later there were 30. The council was split into four areas in 1951, each with its own representative to take over the arduous job of mailing and telephoning. Among the early achievements of the Los Angeles Council were the development of college classes that were specific for co-op directors and teachers, a consulting service with experts who would spend time in schools that had problems, and a union affiliation that provided office space and support systems.

But let's return to an examination of how and why we have had such successful cooperative nursery schools in California. One contributing factor during the period of co-op expansion was the favorable attitude of those holding state administrative offices. This was expressed by Helen Heffernan, of the California State Department of Education, when she was a conference speaker for the National Association for Nursery Education in 1951. She was critical of those members of the teaching profession who were unaware of research supporting early childhood education, she advocated a systematic campaign to acquaint the public with the values to

children and their parents of a good nursery school, and she believed that the development of parent cooperatives had "great predictive importance." My personal recollection is that she was just one of the many individuals in Sacramento who truly believed in the parent participation schools and were eager to facilitate their advancement.

Statewide support continued during Edmund ("Pat") Brown's two terms as governor, beginning in 1959. He insisted that "We are a rich state" and he gave Californians reason to be optimistic about prosperity and social progress. Colleges and universities were established or expanded, a vast project was developed to transport water over long distances, modern freeways were built. Parent education through nursery school participation was considered to be a valuable component of the home economics departments in high schools and community colleges, which meant that the director's salary was at least partially paid by public funds. Brown's administration ended with the 1967 election of Ronald Reagan, whose primary concerns lay elsewhere.

The Co-op Plateau and the Road Ahead

As the concurrent recession and inflation (popularly called "stagflation") coincided with the feminist movement in the late 1960s, the cooperative nursery school movement reached its plateau in California and across the nation. Financial constraints cut funding for parent education classes. Supportive social workers were replaced by overburdened inspectors who concentrated on check lists of regulations violated or of licensing requirements satisfied. Articles in the state newsletters and council board meetings indicate that between 1960 and 1980 total membership in California reached its maximum of about 300 co-op nursery schools. Since then, it has slowly declined to 250 member schools representing about 10,000 families. Perhaps half of the licensed cooperatives have never joined or have moved in and out.

Many factors are involved, beyond the scope of detailed analysis at this point, but we must recognize that the parent participation nursery schools function within larger systems. Even though studies of maternal employment during the 1970s and 1980s have not dealt specifically with the narrow spectrum of the population that has traditionally been involved with preschool participation, we recognize that middle-class families have changed attitudes in recent years. They may not have idolized Betty Friedan and other outspoken feminists, but many mothers needed to consider full time employment. Alan Sroufe, a psychologist at the Institute of Child Welfare in Minneapolis, described telephone calls he got in the early 1970s from women "anguishing over issues surrounding going to work and providing alternative care for their infants or young children. As these women told their stories, two things were clear. First, their

circumstances were impelling them to work. Second, they were basically calling for reassurance, for permission." His response then was to reassure them. In 1988, he said, he was still getting phone calls from mothers but now they were seeking permission to stay home, even though it might jeopardize their careers. This time, he reassured them that they would provide an important foundation for the later lives of their children.

Too recent for adequate tracking, there are indications that more dual-income couples are deciding that one or the other should take a few years off from the "rat race" of corporate life. They are potential participants in co-op nursery schools. For example, a study analyzing at-home mothers was reported by Louise Iscoe and Diane Welch in 1992. They had searched out almost a thousand previously employedTexas women. Their 493 completed and returned questionnaires seem to indicate that these respondents were similar to parent participation preschool mothers. More than a third had received bachelor's degrees and an additional nine percent had advanced degrees. The overwhelming consensus was that they chose to stay home with their children and refused to delegate their care and guidance to somebody else. Of particular importance as a trend with significance to parent cooperatives, the disadvantages included lack of adult companionship, difficulty keeping up professional skills, and lack of structure or routine. One respondent wrote "Some people can't take kids all day. I have days like that, too, but only a few." Some belonged to baby-sitting co-ops, mothers-day out programs, or met other mothers at parks and playgrounds, but none mentioned cooperative nursery schools. In a section of this report that dealt with "sequencing" of careers, moving from paid employment to homemaking and back to work again, one recommendation was to become involved with volunteer work, which can be valuable on a resumé. Another was to find part-time work or home-based work.

Last November, a feature article in the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* was written by Mary Clearly Kiely, their first female Rhodes Scholar. It was entitled "Honey, They're Home" and subtitled "The hours are long and there's no pay. So why is fulltime parenting a plum job?" Illustrations were Victorian-type pastel tinted photographs of several happy mothers and one father who have chosen to become at-home parents. Kiely is now an at-home mother. Her interviews covered the "downs" like "the loss of independence" or potential "problems when returning to the workforce" against the "ups" of staying home with the children, such as "shaping their worldview" and "instilling values by our daily example." One remarked that "I honestly can't conceive of a better application for my Dartmouth education right now, than to be helping build a foundation for the lives of two curious, compassionate citizens of the world." Time as a scarce

resource became a major rationale for deciding against employment, with one mother stating "I found myself thinking about the time that we actually have with our kids, the four or five years before they go to school, and it really isn't that much. I didn't want that time to be filled with stress and anxiety for them." This article is particularly intriguing because Dartmouth College, after having been exclusively for male students since 1769, only succumbed to affirmative action demands in 1970. It might be assumed that female graduates would be particularly career minded, but they made decisions after considering future benefits and evaluating their investment of time and money. Letters published in subsequent issues indicated that other alumni families had made the same choice and for the same reasons.

The idea of mothers choosing not to work full time seems to be a definite trend with positive implications for cooperative preschools. Consider that any large bookstore has a shelf with titles such as *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, by sociologist Sharon Hays. She describes how capitalism gains when mothers work because the middle-class "mommy track" females are paid lower wages than their male counterparts but they guiltily indulge their offspring's enlarged appetites for goods and services. There is no mention of preschool involvement, but Hays considers that non-employed women who choose to provide "intensive mothering" need to find social validation in company with other women. Also supportive is the Net Earnings Model developed by Rose Rubin and Bobye Riney. In calculating work-related and lost household production costs, they found that dual-earner married couples have a median money income 55 per cent higher than husband-only-earner families, but income tax policies penalize them. The Social Security payroll tax is taken from both salaries even though the husband's higher earnings mean that they probably will receive no return on the wife's contributions. Like others who have studied the financial situation of families, their *Working Wives and Dual-Earner Families* suggests an increase in flextime and work-at-home programs In a similar vein, home economist Linda Kelly provides instructions for calculating tax rates in *Two Incomes and Still Broke? It's Not How Much You Make but How Much You Keep* . She reviews the cost of rushed shopping excursions and "reward-guilt buys" and concludes that working part-time, avoiding duplicate medical insurance and other deductions already paid by the primary earner, is the best of both worlds.

What we see in the mid-1990s is that many parents now view dual incomes as a choice to be made after careful analysis. More college educated women, always the mainstay of the co-ops, are delaying child-rearing until after they have established themselves in their careers. Men are accepting the nurturant aspects of fathering, with more and more of

them arranging work schedules so that they can participate in the classrooms. This trend evidences the potential source for new members and another period of expansion of parent participation nursery schools. An extensive survey, covering over 300 licensed parent participation preschools in California, was conducted by the Center for Cooperatives in 1991. It verified that "Many cooperatives are responding to the changing needs of their member families by offering a range of program options." Responses indicated that about one third were not filled to capacity, while over eight percent indicated that a major issue involved expansion to provide for a growing interest in their program. More than half of the respondents provided some type of "buy out" arrangement in lieu of participation requirements and about ten percent of their member families take advantage of this provision. Full time child care was provided by about 19 percent of the cooperatives. Responses to this survey indicated that salaries were higher and benefits were more adequate in cooperatives than in comparable child care centers, and that staff had remained much longer. Fees compared favorably with those for other center-based child care. As individual entities, each cooperative preschool is exploring the changed environment during these last few years of the 20th century. The dual challenge is to let parents know that participation will be a fulfilling and rewarding experience while the schools adapt to the changing needs of families.

Maintaining the Playschool Philosophy

Why do young children need preschools? The reasons have changed since those conscientious parents of the 1920s were concerned with "scientific" habit formation and meeting physical norms. When the co-op idea began to spread across the country, during the prosperous 1950s and 60s, parents asked their children if it had been a "fun" day. The popularity of Freudian psychoanalysis led them to encourage children to develop their social skills and to act out their frustrations and interests through dramatic play and art activities. Many co-ops incorporated "play" in their names or chose other terminology to emphasize this goal.

How has this changed? While some parents have been primarily interested in a safe place to park their child, Sputnik, Head Start, and abundant funding for cognitive research made "What did you learn today?" the customary question asked of the 1970s preschooler. The preference for "cognitive development" through structured activities, with supervision by trained teachers who could talk about Montessori, Piaget and other theorists, meant that "merchandising" abilitities of academic preschools and the child care industry became attractive to what Alison Clarke-Stewart described as the "upwardly mobile 'yuppie' parents who want designer diapers and designer degrees in Greek, Suzuki, and computer

programming for their infants." The mother of a child who had spent the morning mucking around with pails of water in the co-op sandbox, learning mathematics, physics, geography, negotiation skills and other incidental lessons in a "play" program would have a difficult time explaining that "curriculum" to her neighbor whose four-year-old was enrolled for exorbitant tuition in a private nursery school with an academic emphasis and a multi-colored climbing structure costing several thousand dollars in the yard for recess time.

Within recent years, mucking around in the sandbox has once again become respectable. One supportive example is Katharine Nelson's 1996 review of multidisciplinary research. She showed the importance of language development in taking young children to higher levels of cognitive operations in memory, forming concepts and categories, developing time concepts, and understanding the intentions of others. A critical element was communication with adults who could respond to children's interests - a characteristic of the parent participation programs that is not always found in other types of early childhood education. Other research reports increasingly emphasize the need for children to actively explore their environments and express concern over their dependence upon videotapes and computers. A high ratio of nurturant adults to children and their emphasis upon informal conversational language would indicate that the parent participation schools provide superior learning experiences.

Another way to track changes through the past half century relates to changed parental roles. During the early surge of popularity for cooperative nursery schools, mothers were expected to stay home with their children. In addition to this factor, however, even though many would have preferred paid employment, low wages made it less attractive than using time in what economists call 'nonmarket' activities. There were a few private preschools, but they were expensive. Parents viewed participation mornings and Saturday work parties as worthwhile investments in their family's future. The co-op nursery schools provided a socially approved activity for mothers, and one that the fathers could support. One of my finds in the Pacific Oaks archives was a 1959 newspaper clipping headlined "Rummage Sale by VVCC Schools is a Huge Success." For this Saturday fund-raiser, it said, "Fathers of the co-op nursery school helped out by carting in merchandise, moving and setting up tables, and offering encouragement to the hard working gals." Yes, it was spelled G-A-L-S. Are economic factors still important? This was investigated by Stephanie Levin for her 1994 doctoral dissertation. Her sample consisted of 80 participating parents in eight Los Angeles area co-ops. They were highly educated, with 28.7% having graduate degrees and

almost all having attended college, with more than a fourth of them having graduate degrees. More than a third of the respondents considering themselves to be homemakers and only 13 of the 75 mothers had a full-time job. The mean age of parents was 37.4 years and their average participation at the co-op was 3.44 days per month. In Levin's study, only 14% of the parents gave lower costs as a reason for their choice of a co-op. Responses to open-ended questions showed that parents were experiencing a sense of belonging and reduced isolation. They used statements like "The opportunity to observe, interact and get to know my son's friends, teachers, and other mothers is the best part about the involvement." or "I become friendly with a group of mothers." While these parents considered time to be a scarce resource, 95.8% responded that their involvement was an important part of their child's development.

In my own informal questioning of California's parent groups during the past two years, the investment of time appears to be a more important consideration than the cost in dollars. Parents at Palos Verdes Hills Cooperative nodded their heads in agreement with the mother who asserted that "I'd choose this even if it were more expensive." Another aspect of time investment must also be considered – not the time spent at the school but the time without the child. A former participant at the Concord Cooperative reflected this when she said, "When I heard about it, I thought, 'Wow! Four mornings a week for myself ..." And then she added that these were the best years of her life. Even the student mothers in the campus child care center at San Diego State University did not emphasize the advantages of fees adjusted to family income. Instead, they made comments like "Parents are the best trained people to be with children" or "I get lots of good ideas to use at home, like putting together a scarf box for my little girl." They commented on their close relationship with the teachers, with one remarking that "You get to know the teacher better than just pickup and dropoff. There's a chance to really talk about problems when they happen." Then other members of this co-op board indicated unanimous agreement with the mother who inspired the title of my book with the remark that "It's the feeling of camaraderie that I appreciate the most." Adult needs for "camaraderie" are becoming recognized by a wide range of professional disciplines. Psychologists prefer to call it "attachment." One overview of recent research, edited by Michael Sperling and William Berman, has a self-explanatory title of Attachment in Adults: Clinical and Developmental Perspectives. It deals with the emotional and behavioral systems that link children with their parents and other adults, and then goes on to show how important such linkages are throughout the lifespan.

Although formal surveys and informal conversations show us that every preschool program is unique, one thing that they have had in common since the 1920s is the basic premise that young children learn best when they are involved with playful activities. I could talk about this until the middle of next week, but much of what you will actually be doing with the children next week can be traced back three hundred years. A Moravian bishop named Comenius wrote a book called *The School of Infancy* in 1628 that still sounds up-to-date. Most university libraries have it translated into English. (Remember that "infancy" used to mean birth to age seven, not just babyhood.) Among the ideas he introduced were the importance of the earliest years and the necessity of having children learn through doing things they enjoyed, not just listening to an adult. This sounds commonplace today, but in the 1600s it was pretty revolutionary thinking. To commemorate his 400th birthday, our 1992 international conference of early childhood historians was held in Comenius' birth city of Prague. In one seminar, Celia Lascarides enumerated, point by point, the amazing similarity between his ideas and the Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum published by our National Association for the Education of Young Children in 1991.

Many other revolutionary ideas about education through self-chosen and playful activities were proposed during the following centuries, including those of the French philosopher, Rousseau. During the 1950s, when many people in this country were worried about the threat of Russian communism, our Kern County co-ops arranged for me to be the guest on a noontime call-in radio program as part of our Week of the Young Child observance. We knew that a booklet about our "subversive ideas" had been circulating in the community, but it really didn't affect us much. In fact, we thought it was amusing. A typical example was taken from the phonograph record we were all played - "Little Puppet Dance." (To make it even more subversive, the flip side was in French!) To act out the song, a teacher pretended to tie strings to the children's arms and they acted like puppets in following directions. The song had lines like "Lift your arms. Drop them!" In the opinion of this group, we were brainwashing young children so that when the revolution came we would give the command for them to pick up guns and shoot their parents. On my radio interview, I was explaining how our children gained basic science concepts and learned to get along with each other. There were couple of phone calls from mothers who wanted to know how to enroll. Then came a very belligerent voice demanding to know whether I followed the philosophy of Rousseau. The show hostess broke in to say that there wasn't time to answer that question, so I didn't have time to discuss the implications of his writing during the mid-1700s about children being innately good, rather than born

sinners. This was before I got interested in history, but I've never forgotten my amazement that our California co-op nursery schools were being judged by the writings of someone who had been dead for almost two hundred years.

I became involved in history few years later, when Barbara Hartman and I found that there was no textbook was available for the new classes in preschool program administration - classes that had primarily been instigated by the demands of the co-ops in California and other states - . We'd been co-op directors for a long time and were both teaching administration classes for university extension, so we decided to write our own. Textbooks usually begin with some historical background, but nobody seemed to have any information about where and when early education had originated. I owned a turn-of-the-century book called *Paradise of Childhood* that described the Froebelian kindergarten methods, but I'd never paid much attention to it, probably because I didn't realize that they had actually been designed for preschoolers aged about three to seven. Froebel's theory had been based upon his reading of Comenius, supplemented by a trial-and-error type of research. His ideas made such sense, even though he'd proposed them in the 1840s and 50s, that I began to investigate why his name had been forgotten. That became the topic of my doctoral dissertation and of many articles since then. I even used an 1890s map from the book to drive around what was then East Germany to visit places important to him. One of my vivid memories is from the museum in his childhood home, where I saw his tattered coat with big pockets that affectionate children had hung onto - pockets that had been repeatedly pulled off and sewed back on with big clumsy stitches. The display cases had wooden blocks and other items from the mid-1800s that would fit nicely in today's preschools.

What I discovered by talking with women who had been kindergarten teachers in the first years of this century and by digging through archives preserving old papers was that kindergartens had been brought to the United States by German immigrants in the middle of the last century, with the first one in the English language having been started in Boston in 1860. Through the decades, other systems became popular, but many were clones of the original kindergarten ideas with different names attached. While Dolly, the cloned lamb, has been getting a lot of attention, nobody seems to recognize that most "new" ideas in education are really clones of the old ones with different names. American educators may have forgotten the name of Froebel, but we still continue to use many of the ideas he proposed. His kindergartens were places where children learned through play and self-activity. He believed that children's sensory impressions became internalized to form concepts. Have the children in

your preschool ever gathered autumn leaves or rocks for the science table? Have they talked about which is the biggest, or counted them? It sounds obvious to us, but it was a radical new idea in the mid-1800s to think that young children could learn basic concepts in this way. Because Froebel remembered how frustrated he had been as a child when he tried to build things with scraps and discarded bricks, he developed standardized wooden blocks and the sandbox. His sequenced curriculum, going from simple games with soft colored balls to complicated paper-folding similar to origami, laid the basis not only for our traditional nursery schools but for Montessori's method. Most clasrooms still have what he called "circle time" where all of the children gather together for an a teacher-led activity. Here's one example, from the vast array of finger plays he wrote. Let's do it together, and I think you'll recognize the way it develops number and shape concepts while fostering the feeling of "togetherness" that was important to Froebel and remains important to all of us. Ready?

Here's a little ball (index finger and thumb of one hand)
Here's a bigger ball (both thumbs and index fingers)
Here's a great big ball I see (arms circled over head).
Shall we count them? Are you ready? (repeat). One. Two. Three.

Froebel involved parents in the establishment of kindergartens and expected them to participate as assistants to the trained teacher. The old German kindergartens and those in the United States from about 1880 to the mid-1890s were very similar to our co-ops. Compare this statement made in 1880 by Swiss-German Froebelian William Hailmann with what happens in your own school. In his *Lectures* he spoke of discussion groups for participating mothers and said that "so deep, so earnest is the interest manifested, that you are tempted to assume all these are own mothers of the child in question." If we consider the age of enrolled children rather than the school's name, it is appropriate to include an 1873 kindergarten as California's first cooperative preschool. A group of German mothers in San Francisco invited Frau Hertha Semler, a recent graduate of the Froebel Institute of Hamburg, to direct the bi-lingual "Deutscher Kindergarten" that they were organizing. Frau Semler brought some Froebelian equipment with her and parents helped make other items. Despite several moves and name changes, this school continued until the 1906 earthquake demolished the city.

Although a mother's play group at the University of Chicago, started in 1916, is usually considered to be the first in the United States, one designated as a *cooperative nursery* was already operating in Pasadena during the 1915-16 school year. William Hailmann, a prominent Froebelian from the 1860s onward, was a faculty member of Broadoaks Kindergarten Training School in Pasadena from 1907 until his death in

1920. A March 1916 clipping from the Pasadena *Star*, which I discovered in his personal papers at the UCLA Research Library, reported that "Fifty mothers and their children attended the informal meeting yesterday afternoon at the Northside Cooperative Nursery, when Dr. Llewella Merrow gave a most helpful talk on the care of young people and Miss Persons read a paper on the Montessori system." In searching the Pasadena microfiche collection, I found an earlier front page article in the *Star* of August 23, 1915. It was headlined "Co-operating in the Care of Children. Morton Avenue Still in Van of Progressivism With This Modern Idea." Below, a smaller headline said "Mrs. F. P. Hooker and others active in work of unique interest" and the introductory paragraph described "the cooperative care of children" that had originated the previous year. Mothers "divided the work" rather than "just staying at home with their own children." There was a small library of parent education materials and this account concluded with the statement that "much good has resulted from this cooperative scheme, especially in the discussions by the mothers of their own problems and those of their children." Louise Hoocker, who held the school in her home, was a German-born public health nurse who had moved to Pasadena in 1911 after her marriage to a labor union organizer. Hailmann's interest and her German background indicate a Froebelian orientation, as would mention in the newspaper article of "kindergarten apparatus" being part of the program. The discovery of this previously unknown nursery school indicates that others may have been established during this period but left no records for posterity.

An example of the way Froebel's ideas were transmitted to our nursery schools begins with the California Model Kindergarten in Los Angeles, a Froebelian teacher training program opened in 1876 by German immigrant Emma Marwedel. Kate Douglas Wiggin was in Marwedel's first class. She is best known as a writer of *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* and other juvenile fiction, but she opened a kindergarten on Silver Street, in the toughest part of San Francisco, in 1879. It became so famous that writer Joaquin Miller coined the slogan, "When you come to California, see Yosemite first and then the Silver Street Kindergarten."

Like people in today's co-ops, "Miss Kate" was clever at improvising. She believed that if you can't have a garden, children can still see a miracle in the sprouting of a mustard seed. If you can't afford the expensive wooden shapes being sold commercially, you can do just as well with marbles, blocks, and thread spools. In an autobiography finished shortly before her death in 1925, she wrote that "the tremendous faith of those early kindergartners has been justified; the salient principles of Froebel are the principles of great educators of today. ... Throughout the entire school system at the present time we see awakened interest in the

child's nature, respect for his rights, and joy in teaching as a direct outgrowth of his admonition, 'Come, let us live with our children.'"

So how was this faith transmitted to the cooperative nursery schools? In the twelve years that Kate Douglas Wiggin was there, 400 young women graduated from the Silver Street Kindergarten.training program. Many then opened kindergartens in surrounding communities. To trace just one thread in an intricately woven fabric, Jane Ledyard was one of the student teachers. When she married and moved to San Jose, she organized a free Saturday kindergarten that was actually a parent participation playgroup. In 1880, those kindergarten mothers got financial assistance from the local Women's Christian Temperance Union to build a kindergarten bungalow for children aged three to six. Following the Silver Street model, their children's program included both mother participation and a teacher training school. Ezra S. Carr, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, had urged the State Normal School in San Jose to employ a teacher who could teach Froeblian methods. "Such a step," he insisted, would make it "second to none in the United States." The kindergarten training program initiated by these mothers was promptly integrated into the normal school.

Now, as San Jose State University, the teacher education curriculum continues to build upon those kindergarten origins. In a neatly circuitous recognition, the director of their Child Development program, Irene Muira, received the 1996 Honorary Award of Delta Phi Upsilon, an organization established by Pasadena's Froebelian kindergarten teachers in 1926. Other outstanding parent cooperative schools are located here in the San Jose area. The director of the Eastside Parents Participating Nursery School in San Jose, Karen Adams, shared her accreditation experience in the *Preschooler*. In 1995, she won a national award from Lakeshore Learning Materials Company for her suggestion about providing dolls with wheelchairs, hearing aids, walkers, and other "differently-abled" equipment. Parents who graduated from co-ops in and near San Jose have established alternative classrooms or charter schools and private cooperative elementary schools.

During the 1920s, strands of transmittal were even more direct . The McMillan sisters' English nursery school had been modelled upon a Froebelian kindergarten in London. Patty Smith Hill, progressive Froebelian and a member of the faculty at Teachers College, Columbia University, introduced the nursery schools to American education in 1921. Under her guidance, one of the English teachers taught the first American demonstration class. Barbara Greenwood, a graduate of the progressive Chicago Free Kindergarten College, did additional studies there before she began teaching at the University of California in Los Angeles in 1923. She and Helen Christianson introduced the idea of nursery schools with a play

curriculum and continued to support cooperatives well into their postwar period of expansion. Another strand came in 1927, when Children's Community in Berkeley acquired Helen Pennock, also trained in the English system, as its first director. Katharyn Whiteside Taylor, the second director, had been introduced to Froebelian kindergartens as a child in Louisville, Kentucky, where her mother had been principal of a Pestalozzi-Froebel normal school and had worked closely with Patty Smith Hill. Taylor left Berkeley to attend Teachers College, where she got a doctorate in 1937 under the supervision of Lois Meek Stolz. Her description of Children's Community, published by the AAUW in 1931, became the basic primer for other cooperatives. Her later writings, particularly *Parents and Children Learn Together,* continue to guide parent participation nursery schools across the nation and around the world. Throughout California, countless kindergarten pioneers established similar precedents for early education that continue to facilitate children's active learning experiences and encourage parental involvement.

In Conclusion

As parents, teachers, directors and alumni of California parent participation preschools, we can be proud of our influence upon the entire profession of early childhood education. One accomplishment, Nursery Education Week, was initiated in 1954 by Betty Mott of the Santa Monica co-ops. Two years later, it became a Los Angeles Cooperative Council outreach effort to promote the idea of learning through play. By 1961, the parent participation schools were joined by the Southern California Association for Nursery Education and the private Pre-School Association. By 1967, the California Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools voted unanimously to make this an annual statewide event and the other early childhood organizations agreed to continue their cooperation. Betty Mott's article on "What's N.E.W.in California" was published in the September 1966 issue of*Young Children* and in 1969 the National AEYC passed an adoption resolution at the annual conference in Salt Lake City. Betty Mott was immediately appointed national coordinator. From this beginning, we now have a wide variety of observances across the country during the month of April.

Another type of contribution of co-op nursery schools to American culture was play dough. From the time of Froebel's early kindergartens through the rise and fall of the WPA and Lanham Act centers, potter's clay was a valued part of the curriculum. In the early 1950s, a creative co-op mom noticed how much her own children enjoyed playing with the bits of leftover pie dough when she baked and decided to take an adapted recipe to nursery school on her participation day. Soon, all across the country,

other co-op moms were stirring up two cups of flour, one cup of salt, some cooking oil and a bit of alum. Food coloring and such additives as a splash of peppermint oil were optional. One night, according to the story that made its rounds in the co-ops, a father walked into the kitchen while his wife was mixing up a batch to take to nursery school and remarked, "Hey, that stuff would SELL." He was so right! The application for U.S. Patent 3,167,440, filed May 19, 1958, described a "Plastic Modeling Composition of a Soft, Pliable Working Consistency" made of grain flour, water, a hydrocarbon distillate, and a soluble saline extender – with small amounts of perfume or color added. As marketed by Kenner, it soon appeared as Play-Doh on toy store shelves for about a dollar per 6 ounce cylindrical container and school supply catalogues carried assorted commercial versions with varied accessories. Thus far, the ultimate in commercialism is a 1996 Playskool CD-ROM called "Play Doh." Children use the mouse to choose colors and manipulate the on-screen shapes, with no muss, no fuss - and no physical contact.

Despite its humble origins, play dough seems to have become a symbol of proper parenting. A revealing perspective was presented in the 1996 "Women's Issue" of the *New Yorker*. On a page of cartoon-style Bad Mom Cards, one pictured a dejected-looking Deborah S. who "Has never even tried to make Play-Doh from scratch." Beyond that, however, it seems to epitomize the spirit of cooperative nursery schools. Bev Bos, teacher-director of Roseville Community School for almost thirty years, recently described the pleasure children obtain from manipulating flour-salt dough in Child Care Information Exchange. She asserted that this "Joy in Early Childhood Programs" is the element that "keeps us doing what we do." Since many day care personnel have not been exposed to the "joys" of working in a co-op or of permitting children to have experiential activities, Bev Bos and other exponents of the traditional playschool curriculum make important contributions to the early childhood profession.

California has also led the way in adapting to new challenges. Not only can we point to two of the oldest cooperatives in the country, Children's Community and Berkeley Hills, but we have some of the first parent cooperative full-day child care centers. Scattered up and down the state are cooperative centers that were initiated under the auspices of corporations, consortia of employers, government agencies and other support systems. At the same time, while some of the traditional morning nursery schools are struggling to stay open, others have waiting lists.

Perhaps the key to the future lies with a lesson most of us can recall from high school biology classes. It dealt with a little white moth that had existed in England for centuries but was faced with extinction when

everything began to turn black from coal smoke and soot. It survived by evolving into one with dark grey wings that would blend into its environment. Typical cooperative nursery schools in past years have required car-pooling mothers to work one morning a week, and the doors were locked by lunch time. Many are adapting to the changed environment by permitting "buy out" time or flexibility in participation, providing both half-day nursery school and extended hours, and making other modifications to fit today's lifestyles. Contributing to the bright future for our co-op nursery schools are cultural trends that support the idea that "It takes a village to raise a child." It won't be easy, but it appears likely that CCPPNS will be around for another half century. Plan to bake a big cake!

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As indicated throughout the paper, the CCPPNS archival files made available by Marjorie Boehm and the association's publications provided by Rita Horiguchi provided a major source of information. I am deeply indebted to the many individuals who have contributed through letters, interviews, telephone calls, publications from their nursery schools and in other ways. My own accumulation of materials began as a graduate student in the mid-1940s and continued while I was a co-op director, a participating mother and president of the San Joaquin Council, and a professor of child development interested in history.

The interest and assistance displayed by E. Kim Coontz of the Council for Cooperatives, University of California at Davis, where *It's the Camaraderie: A History of Parent Participation Preschools* will be published, has made it possible to document this unique social movement.

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